

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01 SAM-01

DRC-01 /110 W

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R 230157Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2890

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 4688

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, RP

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT MEETS WITH TRADE UNION LEADERS

REF: MANILA 388

BEGIN SUMMARY: IN FIRST PRIVATE MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENT AND LABOR'S TOP LEADERSHIP SINCE MARTIAL LAW, MARCOS TOLD LABOR GROUP APRIL 20 THAT LABOR WOULD BE CONSULTED AND ENCOURAGED TO TAKE PART FULLY IN POLICY-MAKING DELIBERATIONS ON DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS. IN RESPONSE TO LABOR PRESSURE TO SIGN LONG-DELAYED NEW LABOR CODE, HE EXPRESSED HOPE IT WOULD BE READY FOR SIGNING ON LABOR DAY, MAY 1, NO EXPECTATION RIGHT TO STRIKE WILL BE RESTORED. EMBASSY INFORMED THAT LABOR'S PROPOSED JOINT LABOR DAY MANIFESTO, AN HONEST IF MILDLY WORDED STATEMENT OF LABOR'S POSITION UNDER THE NEW SOCIETY, HAS GOTTEN THE GREEN LIGHT FROM MARCOS. AS LAST YEAR, THE TRADITIONAL LABOR DAY PARADES HAVE BEEN PROHIBITED, APPARENTLY TO AVOID ANY POSSIBILITY OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATIONS OR EXPRESSIONS OF LABOR DISCONTENT. END SUMMARY.

1. TOP LABOR LEADERS TROPPED TO MALACANANG PALACE APRIL 20 TO INVITE PRESIDENT MARCOS TO DELIVER TRADITIONAL LABOR DAY SPEECH ON MAY 1. AS LAST YEAR, MAY DAY FESTIVITIES
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WILL BE HELD AT MALACANANG'S MAHARLIKA HALL. LABOR

SECRETARY OPLE ACCOMPANIED THE TRADE UNION GROUP WHICH INCLUDED ROBERTO OCA (TUCP), PEDRO FERNANDEZ (PTUC), JOHNNY TAN (FFW), DEMOCRITO MENDOZA (ALU), JEREMIAS MONTEMAYOR (FFF), IGNACIO LACSINA (NATU) AND CESAR LEGAYADA (FUR).

2. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, MARCOS TOLD THE GROUP THAT LABOR WOULD BE CONSULTED AND ENCOURAGED TO TAKE PART FULLY IN POLICY-MAKING DELIBERATIONS, A ROLE THAT BUSINESS AND INDUSTRIAL SECTORS ALREADY ENJOY. AFTER DISCUSSING AVENUES FOR LABOR'S "MAXIMUM SOCIAL PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT", HE INSTRUCTED INDUSTRY SECRETARY PATERNO TO INVITE LABOR REPRESENTATIVES TO HEARINGS DEALING WITH DEVELOPMENT AND INCREASED PRODUCTION EFFORTS. IN ADDITION TO OPLE AND PATERNO, OTHER CABINET MEMBERS PRESENT THROUGHOUT MEETING WERE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY MELCHOR AND DEFENSE SECRETARY PONCE ENRILE.

3. THE TRADE UNION LEADERS ON THEIR SIDE PRESSED FOR THE IMMEDIATE PROMULGATION INTO LAW OF THE ENTIRE NEW LABOR CODE. THE PRESIDENT REPLIED THAT HE HOPED SUBSTANTIAL AGREEMENT COULD BE REACHED SO THAT THE CODE WOULD BE READY FOR SIGNING ON LABOR DAY. HE FURTHER DIRECTED SECRETARIES OPLE AND PATERNO TO IRON OUT CONTROVERSIAL PROVISIONS OF THE DRAFT.

4. COMMENT: THIS WAS FIRST PRIVATE MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENT AND LABOR'S TOP LEADERSHIP SINCE MARTIAL LAW IMPOSED IN SEPTEMBER 1972. ENTIRE CABINET WAS INITIALLY ON HAND TO GREET GROUP, WHICH PERHAPS INDICATIVE FRATERNAL ATMOSPHERE MARCOS ATTEMPTED CREATE. FFW PRESIDENT TAN TOLD EMBASSY THAT MARCOS MADE EVERY EFFORT TO BE ACCOMMODATING, THOUGH IT REMAINED TO BE SEEN WHETHER ACTIONS WILL FOLLOW MARCOS' PRO-LABOR STANCE.

5. TAN NOTED THAT CONTENTS OF LABOR'S PROPOSED JOINT MAY DAY MANIFESTO -- WHICH HE DRAFTED -- WAS ALSO DISCUSSED. DRAFT HAD ALREADY BEEN SOMEWHAT SANITIZED BY BOTH OPLE AND LABOR UNDERSECRETARY INCIONG. THE PRESIDENT REQUESTED PONCE ENRILE'S "SECURITY CLEARANCE" ON THE SPOT, WHICH THE DEFENSE SECRETARY GAVE AFTER MODIFYING SEVERAL CONFIDENTIAL

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PHRASES. TAN IS SATISFIED THAT THE MANIFESTO, IF NOW ALLOWED TO REMAIN IN ITS PRESENT FORM, IS AN HONEST IF MILDLY WORDED STATEMENT OF LABOR'S POSITION UNDER THE NEW SOCIETY WHICH WILL STAND UP TO SCRUTINY BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD. HE ASSERTED IT CERTAINLY WILL BE A GREAT IMPROVEMENT OVER LAST YEAR'S LABOR MANIFESTO WHICH WAS FORCED ON THE LABOR MOVEMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT.

6. SINCE MARTIAL LAW, THE TRADITIONAL LABOR DAY PARADES HAVE BEEN PROHIBITED, APPARENTLY TO AVOID ANY POSSIBILITY OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATIONS OR EXPRESSIONS OF LABOR DISCONTENT. WHAT WITH WORKERS INCREASINGLY COMPLAINING ABOUT THE INFLATIONARY SQUEEZE, THIS YEAR'S PARADE PROHIBITION IS EVEN MORE UNDERSTANDABLE FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF THE GOP.

7. ALTHOUGH IN FACT SOME 75 PERCENT OF LABOR CODE PROVISIONS HAVE ALREADY BEEN PROMULGATED, SIGNING WOULD BE CONSIDERABLE VICTORY FOR LABOR SECTOR. MAJOR OUTSTANDING LABOR CODE PROVISIONS DEAL WITH NEW NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS COUNCIL, WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION, AND "RESTRUCTURING" OF LABOR MOVEMENT. ALTHOUGH BOTH TAN AND MENDOZA HAVE IN EFFECT TOLD EMBASSY THEY WILL BELIEVE IT WHEN THEY SEE IT, UNDERSECRETARY INCIONG ASSURED AAFLI DIRECTOR GOODWYN ON APRIL 22 THAT PRESIDENT PREPARED TO SIGN LABOR CODE ON MAY DAY. THERE IS NO RPT NO EXPECTATION THAT BAN ON RIGHT TO STRIKE AND PICKET WILL BE LIFTED.
PURNELL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: WAGES, INFLATION, LABOR RELATIONS, COST OF LIVING, PRICES, LABOR UNION OFFICIALS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 APR 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974MANILA04688
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740094-0704
From: MANILA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740422/aaaaasxz.tel
Line Count: 135
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: MANILA 388
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07-Aug-2002 by worrelsw>; APPROVED <14 FEB 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENT MEETS WITH TRADE UNION LEADERS
TAGS: ELAB, RP
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005